



Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office

Operations Directorate — Fact Sheet

Department of Defense Personnel Recovery Conference

ISSUE: Interdepartmental and interagency coordination of personnel recovery matters

BACKGROUND: Communication within the Personnel Recovery Community (for which DPMO is the policy-lead) is a major challenge. Many agencies from throughout the government, especially within DoD, are undertaking significant initiatives to improve USG recovery capabilities, but not everyone is aware of the various projects underway. Under the Missing Persons Act (MPA), paragraphs 1501(a)(1)(B), and (a)(2), DPMO is responsible for, “coordination for the Department of Defense with other departments and agencies of the United States on all matters concerning missing persons,” and, “within DoD among the military departments, the Joint Staff, and the commanders of the combatant commands.”

DISCUSSION: Since 1997, DPMO has hosted an annual DoD Personnel Recovery Conference in order to exercise this aspect of its responsibilities under the MPA. Though specific objectives for the conferences vary each year, the overarching purposes of the conference are consistent each year – to heighten awareness of personnel recovery at the highest levels of the U.S. Government, exchange ideas within the recovery community, identify and resolve policy-level issues pertaining to personnel recovery within DoD and the interagency community, and chart a course for the future of personnel recovery within the Department.

The 1997 conference was held at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Though well attended, we found that hosting the conference outside the Washington, D.C. area limits attendance by much of our target audience – senior DoD decision makers. We hosted the 1998 and 1999 conferences at the Defense Logistics Agency, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, but quickly outgrew their capacity. We held the 2001 conference at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City. Though being in a civilian facility precluded classified discussions, their facilities gave us the capacity to accommodate more than twice the number of participants we held in past years, and provided first class facilities in which to host the conference.

The agenda for the conferences has included a combination of plenary, panel, and workshop sessions with topics covering the full spectrum of personnel recovery activities. The final conference session has always included a presentation of the issues raised in each of the panels and workshops. Each issue included a discussion of the issue, recommendations, and a suggested action office. This back-brief of issues is the true heart of the conference and establishes issues for the Community to work throughout the year.

DPMO will co-chair the 2002 conference with United States Joint Forces Command August 6-8, 2002, once again at the Crystal City Hyatt Regency. Since the inaugural conference in 1997, this important forum has grown exponentially both in the breadth of topics discussed and the level of participation. More importantly, the designation of USJFCOM as the DoD Executive Agent for personnel recovery in 2000 partnered USJFCOM and DPMO in the effort to build a fully integrated personnel recovery architecture in DoD. It was a natural evolution for the two organizations to work together in the conference, thereby providing clear authority for the conference to address both high-level policy and operational issues. More importantly, the combined effort of DPMO and USJFCOM in this endeavor presents a united effort working toward identical goals by both the policy proponent and Executive Agent for personnel recovery.